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AUTHOR Bergin, Joyce Williams
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ABSTRACT

With reference to Frances Smardo's proposal in the late 1970s that librarians who work with preschoolers be trained in the competencies required to serve their young patrons, a survey was conducted to investigate current trends in services offered to preschool children, and the training in early childhood education received by librarians involved in such programs. Questionnaires were mailed to 455 public libraries in the state of Texas, and 195 (43%) were returned. Analysis of the information gathered indicates that few persons who are currently providing services to preschool children in public libraries have training in the area of early childhood education sufficient to assist them in providing the most effective kinds of services, and that preschool services in Texas libraries--which suffer from a lack of sufficient funding and trained staff--hold a low priority among library services. A discussion of selected literature is provided, and conclusions and suggestions are enumerated. The survey instrument and cover letter are appended, and a selected bibliography is provided. (KM)

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# PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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A PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

BY

JOYCE WILLIAMS BERGIN, M.Ed.

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DENTON, TEXAS

NOVEMBER 1984

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## INTRODUCTION

During the mid and late 1970's the library literature was filled with pleas for more development of services to preschool children as well as with reports of new and relatively creative services being offered by some few libraries. The 1980's has seen little such enthusiasm reflected in the literature, although the writer believed that the need was still there.

In the late 70's, Frances Smardo investigated the qualifications of public librarians who worked with preschoolers and determined that they were not proficient in the skills of early childhood education. Smardo proposed that librarians who worked with preschoolers be trained in the competencies required to serve their young patrons.[1] The writer was curious as to whether this had happened.

The purposes of this paper, therefore, were to investigate the current trends in services offered to preschool children and to ascertain whether librarians who work with them have any training in the area of early childhood education.

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[1]Frances A. Smardo, "Are Librarians Prepared to Serve Young Children?" Journal of Education for Librarianship 20 (Spring 1980): 274-84.

## CHAPTER I

## REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Historically, public library programs for children below the age of five years emerged as an afterthought to the services developed for children of school age. The earliest children's programs began as story telling sessions in the public libraries of New York, Chicago and Cleveland at the turn of the century. The popularity of these early programs allowed spin-offs in the form of Saturday morning nursery tale sessions for children of preschool age.[1]

The story telling programs designed to introduce the juvenile reader to literature changed relatively little in format and philosophy until the end of World War II. Public demand for story hours for preschoolers increased due to the influx of women into the work force. Mothers of young children had less time available to take "full responsibility for the care, amusement, and education of their small children."[2]

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[1]Harriet G. Long, Public Library Service to Children (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1969), pp. 135-153.

[2]Elizabeth Henry Gross, Children's Services in Public Libraries (Chicago: American Library Association, 1963), p. 80.

Many children's librarians resisted these new demands because their philosophy of library service to children centered around the introduction of books to juvenile readers. The play activities sometimes added to the nursery tale sessions to keep the young children amused and attentive did not seem proper for a public library. They viewed these new patron demands for services to non-reading young children to be a form of babysitting.[1]

Despite resistance, the first services to preschoolers had gained a foothold. In 1957 a survey of 259 libraries which individually served populations over 50,000 revealed that 121 were conducting preschool story hours. The majority of these story hour programs had added the use of picture books to the story telling.[2] By 1963 preschool programs had become more fully accepted and a national report on library services published that year listed preschool story hours as "a regular part of many library programs for children."[3]

The American Library Association's Standards for Children's Services in Public Libraries, issued in 1964, state

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Gross, Children's Services in Public Libraries, p. 80.

[3]Eulalie Steinmetz Ross, "The United States",in Library Service to Children, Committee on Library Work with Children (Sweden: Bibliotekstjanst Lund, 1963) pp. 118-119.

that "The public library is organized to include services to children from infancy through approximately thirteen years of age."[1] These standards do not specify the kinds of programs to be provided for children under the age of five and librarians of this period did not seem eager to explore the expansion of services to preschoolers.

In 1967 Elizabeth H. Gross first articulated some basic objectives for preschool programs in public libraries. She explained:

> Some librarians do not favor story hours for this age (three to five years) on the basis that they tend to be "a baby sitting service." This need not be true if the purpose of introducing children to books, to the library and to association with children of their own age group is explained to parents beforehand.[2]

Gross provided some basic guidelines for conducting successful preschool story hours. She explained that mothers were generally a distraction and should be encouraged to leave the children's area as soon as the children had become acclimated. She advised that the story hour sessions be scheduled away from public areas or at times when the library was not open to the general public or when few patrons were on the premises. A record player was considered a necessity to enliven the program. Gross further suggested the use of finger plays.

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[1]American Library Association, Standards for Children's Services in Public Libraries (Chicago: American Library Association, 1964), p. 15.

[2]Elizabeth H. Gross, Public Library Service to Children (Dobbs Ferry: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1967) p. 96.

simple games and picture books to round out the sessions.[1]

Throughout the 1960's there seemed to be little straying from the style of preschool program described by Elizabeth Gross. Toward the end of the 1960's, however, much was occurring in the areas of public library funding as well as in funding for public education which would have a direct effect on library programs for preschoolers. More money was being made available to public libraries by way of the 1964 amendments to the Library Services Act. Grants designed to develop and/or extend services were being offered to libraries, setting a trend that would carry well into the 1970's.[2]

Because of the relative affluence of the late 1960's, new agencies began to emerge and new emphasis was being brought to bear on provision of services to populations that were underserved or unserved by educational agencies including public libraries. The U.S. Office of Education established the National Center for Educational Research and Development. This agency served as an umbrella for a network of different kinds of research and centers. In 1967 the National Laboratory for Early Childhood Education was established at the University of Illinois. Six regional centers were established, one in each of the following states:

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[1] Gross, Public Library Service to Children, p. 97.

[2] Ann Prentice, Public Library Finance (Chicago: American Library Association, 1977), pp. 13-15.

Arizona, Oregon, Tennesssee, Illinois, Kansas, and two in New York state.[1] National attention began to be focused on the educational needs of the preschool child.

In that same year, the State of New York's Report of the Commissioner of Education's Committee on Library Development dropped a bomb whose blast jolted children's librarians into reevaluation of their roles, especially in the area of services to preschool children. This report recommended that "all library service to children in New York be transferred to the elementary school media center."[2] Since many librarians believed that as goes New York, so goes the nation, panic ensued and debate raged.[3]

Children's librarians in 1970 were "searching for their identity" according to Ann Phinazee, Dean of the School of Library Science at North Carolina Central University. She explained that "Threats to give sole responsibility for serving children after they enrolled (in public schools and kindergartens) as well as the need to bolster lowered circulation statistics by appealing to the current residents of cities, stimulated the idea of rendering more service to pre-

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[1] Binnie Tate, "The Role of the Public Library as an Alternative Force in Early Childhood Education," Commissioned Paper, Columbia University, 1974, pp. 34-35.

[2] J. Gordon Burke, ed., Children's Library Service: School or Public (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1974, p. 9.

[3] Ibid.

school children and their parents."[1]

Phinazee's own university conducted a two year study of services to preschool children in the public libraries of North Carolina and found that more was needed in this area. The university survey included a review of the catalogs of fifty library schools, thirty seven of them American Library Associaton accredited, and found only one course that specifically mentioned the preschool age group. The school which offered this course was not in the United States. Most librarians interviewed in the course of this study were more interested in the children they served after the children had learned to read and only wished to engage in story telling when working with young, non-readers. Incidents of librarians conferring with early childhood educators were rarely found.[2]

Following this study, the North Carolina Central University initiated the Early Childhood Library Specialist program, an area of concentration within the Masters of Library Science degree program. Specialists emerging from this program would be trained in the techniques necessary to establish rapport with young children and their parents, demon-

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[1] Annette Lewis Phinazee, "Libraries Respond to the Needs of Young Children," Paper given at a workshop entitled "Library/ Literature Experiences for the Young Child, "Baltimore, Maryland, 2 October 1980.

[2] Ibid.

strate knowledge of a diversity of learning resources appropriate for young children, employ effective methods for introducing children to the use of media for education and recreation and perform effectively in a leadership role in the educational programs for a variety of community agencies.[1] The university viewed this program as a means of providing effective librarians who could work with preschoolers in North Carolina and elsewhere.

Once targeted as a population in need of services, preschoolers became the subject of studies by numerous educational facilities including public libraries. In the early 1970's, not only were preschoolers being viewed as a group in need of special programs but so was the subgroup termed culturally or economically disadvantaged. Binnie Tate described the populations in this manner:

> Approximately forty percent of the nation's children ages three to five years are attending school this year (1974) as compared to twenty-five per cent in 1964. This estimate excludes day care centers outside the public school that are primarily custodial. The great majority of these children who are enrolled in pre-primary schools are white and middle class. A new look must be directed at the role of the public library in providing preschool experiences for poor children.[2]

Encouraged by the federal government's funding of early childhood educational enrichment programs such as Head Start,

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[1]Phinazee, "Libraries Respond to the Needs of Young Children," p. 5.

[2]Tate, "The Role of the Public Library as an Alternative Force in Early Childhood Education," p. 3.

the Child Family Resource Program, and Follow Through, libraries began using LSCA grants to create special services to preschoolers. Special emphasis was placed upon providing services to the disadvantaged subgroup.

The San Francisco Public Library's Early Childhood Education Program was established in 1972 to meet community needs for information about young children and early childhood materials. The program was funded under Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act and is designed to sponsor lectures and demonstrations of children's materials and their educational uses to parents and caregivers of young children.[1]

The Dial-a-Story component of this same program has been highly successful and copied by many other lirbraries. Begun in 1973, it allowed preschoolers to experience a special listening exercise. The Dial-a-Story was created primarily as an impact item to draw attention to the library's Early Childhood Project.[2]

In 1972, the Erie Metropolitan Library secured the necessary LSCA funds from the State Library of Pennsylvania to

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[1]Jane Granstrom and Jacqueline Morris, "Capsule Comments on Current Programs for Preschoolers," Top of the News 31 (November 1974): 55-59.

[2]Linda Geistlinger, "Dial-a-Story," in Start Early for an Early Start: You and the Young Child, ed. Ferne Johnson (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976), pp. 105-108.

open the Media Library for preschoolers. This special library is geared solely to the needs of the preschool child and his parents. Even the operating hours are set for times convenient to families. This media library incorporates the use of live animal lending, children's television, methods for choosing books and various multimedia programs.[1]

A federally funded project allowed the Elsmere Branch of the Glassboro (New Jersey) Public Library System to train parents from a local housing project to engage in meaningful parent-child interaction with their preschoolers through the use of toys, story telling and free play.[2]

An LSCA grant provided funds allowing the Grand Prarie (Texas) Memorial Library to initiate mobile library service to preschool children unable to come to the public library. Begun in 1975, the program used a school bus converted to a media mobile unit which "could enter the remote neighborhoods of the city to provide a gathering place for preschool children and their parents."[3]

The North Richland Hills (Texas) Public Library received

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[1] Kenneth G. Sivulich and Sandra Stroner Sivulich, "Media Library for Preschoolers: A Service of the Erie Metropolitan Library," Top of the News 31 (November 1974): 49-54.

[2] Ferne Johnson and Jacqueline Morris, "The Library Door Is Open," in Start Early for an Early Start: You and the Young Child, pp. 177-178.

[3] Janis Roberson, "Preschool Programming in the Grand Prarie Memorial Library," (Professional paper, Texas Woman's University, 1976).

an LSCA grant under Title I in 1976 to create an outreach program that would provide public library services for preschoolers and which would reach the disadvantaged in the community. Story hours, films and collections of books were taken to area day care centers and to kindergarten programs in both public and private schools that had no access to school library services.[1]

The library literature of the 1970's is replete with descriptions of such programs begun with federal monies. Innovation and outreach seem to be the key descriptors applicable to programs created during this period. Other programs which were not necessarily begun with grant monies were nonetheless creative and were a far cry from the basic story telling sessions characteristic of preschool programs of the 1950's and 60's.

For example, crafts classes for two and three year olds were conducted by children's librarians in Fairfax County, Virginia because parents requested such programs. Many parents did not want their young ones to attend a preschool each day but did want them to have a group experience. The public library provided a service to meet this demand.[2]

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[1]Laura Prewitt, "Development of an Outreach Program for the North Richland Hills Public Library," (Professional paper, Texas Woman's University, 1976).

[2]Marie Irene Lane, "Preschool Craft Activities," School Library Journal 23 (May 1977): 43.

The Clovis-Carver (New Mexico) Public Library has developed a special toy lending service which is based on the theory that the parent is the most significant teacher of the preschool child. In addition to lending toys, the library runs series of classes for parents in which they are taught how to use the toys effectively with their children.[1]

The Anderson Branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio) uses films, various musical instruments, and crafts sessions as well as discussions to conduct a program called "Music Images" for preschoolers and their parents. Begun in 1982, the program introduces music and art to the young child.[2]

The Orange (California) Public Library created a structured two-hour program described as a "mini-school." Preschoolers participate in imaginary journeys, free play, story time, crafts and social interaction with peers and adults.[3]

Since 1970 library literature has suggested a national proliferation of programs designed specifically for the preschool child. Special training programs in early childhood education for children's librarians have been encouraged and in one instance actually begun. North Carolina Central Uni-

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[1]Philip D. Baker, "Exemplary Media Programs," School Library Journal 23 (May 1977): 23-27.

[2]Tari Marshall, "Music Brings Preschoolers to Cincinnati Library," American Libraries 13 (November 1982): 642.

[3]Johnson and Morris, "The Library Door Is Open," p. 177.

versity had begun its Early Childhood Specialist Program in 1970. Despite these progressive steps, some observers in the field have voiced strong concerns about the quality and continuity of the programs. They have also expressed concerns about the training and qualifications of librarians who work directly with preschool children.

In 1974 Binnie Tate concluded the extensive report entitled "The Role of the Public Library as an Alternative Force in Early Childhood Education" with the following statement:

> Currently, in most instances the planning for preschool programs is sporadic, depending upon the availability of staff, time and facilities. The option as to whether it will be merely a story hour. . .is usually left up to the librarian. The typical time schedule is six weeks either in the spring, fall or summer. Even in cases where year around programs are the practice, they are scheduled for once or twice a week. Themes for programs are chosen according to interest or individual ideas. Few programs are structured around focal concepts. Therefore, evaluations for developmental impact are hard to do.[1]

Some of these same concerns have been echoed by others. Robert Grover and Mary Kevin Moore conducted a survey involving 310 public library children's specialists in 74 California systems in 1982 and found that while 90 per cent of the respondents reported offering preschool story hours, only 58.7 per cent offered the programs on a weekly basis. Grover and Moore

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[1] Tate, "The Role of the Public Library as an Alternative Force in Early childhood Education," p. 76.

found that 23.2 per cent of the libraries responding offered the preschool story hours irregularly. Even those programs which might have special appeal for preschoolers such as puppet shows, special programs and projects offered in cooperation with other community agencies are either not offered or are offered irregularly. The table of the results of this survey follows.

Table 1

FREQUENCY OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS IN LIBRARIES[1]

| Activity | Percent of offerings and frequency | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not offered | Weekly | Monthly | Irregularly | Summer only |
| Class visits to library | 4.8 | 41.6 | 11.3 | 41.9 | 0.3 |
| Preschool story hour | 10.3 | 58.7 | 4.5 | 23.2 | 3.2 |
| School visits | 12.6 | 11.3 | 11.9 | 61.6 | 2.6 |
| Film programs | 18.1 | 22.6 | 17.1 | 36.5 | 5.8 |
| Puppet shows | 23.9 | 2.3 | 4.2 | 64.8 | 4.8 |
| Book talks | 27.4 | 11.0 | 7.7 | 49.0 | 4.8 |
| Other story hour | 27.7 | 13.2 | 6.5 | 41.0 | 11.6 |
| Reading games | 37.1 | 1.6 | 1.0 | 31.9 | 28.4 |
| Other special programs | 52.9 | 6.1 | 5.5 | 22.9 | 12.6 |
| Projects with other community agencies (excluding schools) | 64.2 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 30.0 | 1.9 |

N=310

In 1980 the results of a study conducted by Frances Smardo indicated that professionals who work with preschoolers lack

[1] Robert Grover and Mary Kevin Moore, "Print Dominates Services to Children," American Libraries 113 (April 1982):268-269.

sufficient understanding of the developmental stages of early childhood to successfully assist their young patrons. Smardo summarized her research by stating the, "Needs assessment surveys and statements made by library educators, children's coordinators/administrators and children's librarians support the premise that both the library school curriculum and the continuing education training of children's librarians should be altered to emphasize particular competencies for serving preschool patrons."[1]

Smardo had completed an extensive review of the literature pertaining to this topic. She then conducted telephone interviews with eleven authorities on early childhood education and mailed questionnaires to fifty-five others. Smardo picked these authorities from the following agencies and organizations: The National Association for the Education of Young Children, The Association of Childhood Education International, The Texas Education Agency, and the Early Childhood Education programs of three Texas universities. These authorities' responses to Smardo's questions concurred with the findings of her review of the literature. Smardo concluded that "the area of personnel is definitely a high priority with as yet unmet needs."[2]

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[1] Frances Smardo, "Are Librarians Prepared to Serve Young Children?" Journal of Education Librarianship 20 (Spring 1980): 274.

[2] Ibid, p. 282.

L. B. Woods and Bonilyn Hunt conducted a smaller study of four kinds of community preschool programs served by public libraries. The intent of the study was to gain an insight into the relationship of preschools to the libraries that serve them and how these relationships are viewed from the perspectives of the preschools being served.

The preschool personnel's responses indicated that they were happy with the services they received. However, Woods and Hunt noted a lack of communication among schools and the libraries concerning the present library services of which the preschools might take advantage. Woods and Hunt found that "In almost all instances the librarian is looked upon as a storyteller who provides materials rather than as a resource person. There is little consideration of her value as a consultant and the pervasive attitude is that teachers are better informed than the librarian."[1]

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[1]L. B. Woods and Bonilyn Hunt, "A View of Library Services Offered to Preschool Programs," Top of the News 36 (Summer 1980): 374.

In view of the many years of development involved in preschool programs in public libraries and the concerns by observers in the field that indicate inadequacies on the part of these programs, one must wonder about the current status of these programs. Are the programs begun with federal grants being supported by localities now? How wide spread are programs for preschoolers? How often are the programs being presented? What kinds of educational backgrounds do the persons conducting these programs have? And, finally, are preschool programs a priority in 1984?

## CHAPTER II

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Following a review of the literature, three operations were completed in the course of preparing for the study:

1. determination of the specific items the study should include
2. development of an instrument to collect the survey information
3. choice of the survey population.

The items chosen for this study were derived from the writer's own interests and from surveying previous studies in this area. The items selected were as follows: kinds and frequency of preschool services, approximate percentage of total library budgets allocated for children's services, approximate percentage of total children's services budgets allocated for preschool services, the number of preschool programs begun with grant monies, the sources of grant monies used to begin preschool services, the educational and experiential background of librarians serving preschool children, and the number of years libraries had offered services for preschoolers. Upon completion of this selection process, a questionnaire was devised. This questionnaire was reviewed with the faculty advisor, revised, and prepared for mailing. A copy of the cover letter and the questionnaire are included

in Appendix A.

On August 25, 1984 the questionnaire was mailed to four hundred fifty-five libraries in the state of Texas. Included in this survey population were those libraries identified as public libraries by Texas Public Libraries Statistics 1982, a publication of the Library Development Division of the Texas State Library.[1] Included were all public libraries which had twenty or more hours of operation per week. Excluded were those libraries operating fewer than twenty hours per week as well as those identified as branch libraries operating within the same city as their central or parent library.

Public libraries in Texas were selected as the target population because of their close proximity to the writer and the expectation that this proximity would encourage greater response. Other considerations for selecting this population included the expectation that economic growth in Texas over the past twenty years would be conducive to greater funding for libraries and the fact that some researchers in the field of preschool services in libraries are located in Texas. These considerations made Texas seem a fertile area for study.

The questionnaire along with its cover letter was mailed to the head librarian of each facility in the survery population.

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[1]Texas State Library, Texas Public Library Statistics for 1982 (Austin, Texas: Texas State Library, 1983), pp. 1-69.

## CHAPTER III

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 455 questionnaires mailed, 195 or 43 per cent were returned. Of this number, 134 were returned within the first two weeks of the mailing date. Nine questionnaires were returned with brochures describing the preschool services offered by these libraries. Three were accompanied by letters requesting copies of the completed study.

The size and rapidity of response seems to indicate interest among librarians in the topic being studied as well as a willingness to share information.

Of the 195 librarians who responded to the questionnaire, 170 indicated that their libraries offered services to preschool children. The majority of these libraries reported that they had been providing services to preschoolers for twenty years of less. Of the 121 libraries reported to have been providing services for twenty years or less, 63 per cent had been offering these services for ten years or less. These figures tend to corroborate Ann Phinazee's contention that the threat to give sole responsibility of serving children to school librarians stimulated public librarians to extend services to preschoolers.[1] This trend would have begun in 1967 following the State of New York's Report of the Commissioner of Education on Library Development.

Tables 1 and 2 show the kinds and frequency of preschool services being offered as well as the percentage of libraries offering each service.

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[1] Phinazee, "Libraries Respond to the Needs of Young Children," p.5.

Table 2 KINDS AND FREQUENCY OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS OFFERED

N = 170

| Service | Frequency | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily | Weekly | Twice A Month | Once A Month | Less Often |
| Story Time (multi-media) | 4 | 120 | 7 | 4 | 20 |
| Film/filmstrip shows | 12 | 74 | 10 | 21 | 25 |
| Story Telling | 2 | 61 | 6 | 2 | 27 |
| Outreach to Community Preschool Programs | 5 | 39 | 7 | 12 | 20 |
| Arts and Crafts Activities | 1 | 14 | 10 | 11 | 48 |
| Musical Programs | 0 | 14 | 3 | 2 | 24 |
| Other | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 25 |
| Parent-Child Cooperative Activities | 2 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 14 |
| Educational Toy Lending | 14 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Dial-A-Story | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |

Table 3 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS OFFERING SPECIFIC SERVICES

N = 170

| Service | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Story Time (multi-media) | 91 |
| Film/filmstrip Shows | 83.5 |
| Story Telling | 57.6 |
| Outreach to Community Preschool Programs | 48.8 |
| Arts and Crafts Activities | 49 |
| Musical Programs | 25 |
| *Other | 22.9 |
| Parent-Child Cooperative Activities | 15 |
| Educational Toy Lending | 14 |
| Dial-A-Story | 3.5 |

Other includes puppet shows, summer reading programs, contests, parties

When comparing these figures to the findings of Grover and Moore's[1] 1982 survey of California library systems, Texas librarians offer traditional services to preschoolers more frequently and on a more regular basis. Story times and film programs are offered more frequently by Texas librarians than by those in the California study but other forms of services to preschoolers in both studies seem to correlate in terms of frequency. Most of the librarians who reported that their services were scheduled less often than once a month indicated that these services were part of the summer reading programs that are typically designed for school aged children.

Although 83 Texas librarians report that their libraries offer some form of outreach to community preschool programs, only 39 or 22.9 per cent offer such services on a regularly scheduled basis. These services, along with such services as educational toy lending, which require the librarian to assume a resource or consultant's role, are offered only by a few libraries and then on a rather sporadic basis. These findings indicate that the proliferation of preschool services evident in the descriptions offered in the literature of the 1970's is not evident in 1984.

Because few librarians in this survey indicated that the personnel in charge of preschool services are assuming the

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[1]Grover and Moore, "Print Dominates Services to Children," pp. 268-69.

role of consultant or resource person by extending services to community preschool programs, they are perhaps missing a valuable opportunity to demonstrate their expertise and value to preschool teachers. They are not extending their services to the population Tate described in 1974 as having the greatest need.[1] Librarians no longer seem to be actively seeking means to assist the population once termed disadvantaged.

A survey of the literature of the late 1960's and early 1970's indicates that librarians had taken advantage of the period of affluence and increased federal aid to develop preschool services for their libraries using a variety of grants. The librarians queried in this survey reported that only 12 of the 170 respondents had used grant monies to begin services. Of the 19 services begun with grant monies, 6 were begun with federal grants, 9 were begun with state grants, and 4 were begun with private grant monies. Fourteen of these 19 services were reportedly still in operation. The use of grant monies specifically for the development of preschool programs seems not to have been a trend in Texas libraries.

In an attempt to ascertain the status of preschool services in the public libraries surveyed, librarians were asked first to give the approximate percentage of the overall library budget allocated to children's service, that is, to ser-

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[1]Tate, "The Role of the Public Library as an Alternative Force in Early Childhood Education," p. 3.

vices provided children ranging in age from preschool through age twelve. Then they were asked to indicate the approximate percentage of the total children's services budget allocated to preschool services. These figures could be compared in order to obtain some idea of how important preschool services were in terms of funds provided for their maintenance. Tables 4 and 5 summarize the librarians' responses.

Table 4 APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

N = 170

| Approximate Percentage of Budget | Number of Libraries Responding | Percentage of Libraries Responding |
|---|---|---|
| 1% | 12 | 7 |
| 1 - 10% | 37 | 21.8 |
| 11 - 20% | 25 | 14.7 |
| 21 - 35% | 37 | 21.8 |
| 36 - 50% | 12 | 7 |
| 50% | 0 | 0 |
| no response | 47 | 27.6 |

These figures indicate that services to preschool children are not a priority item in the budgets of most of the libraries surveyed. The majority of the respondents, 65.3 per cent, reported that up to 35 per cent of their budgets went to children's services. Interestingly, 21 librarians reported

that between 36 and 50 percent of the children's services budget was allocated to preschool services, but another 41 indicated that their budgets would reflect allocations of 10 per cent or less for preschool services. Many of the 78 respondents who offered no numerical response stated on their questionnaires that this kind of budget information was not available or that they were unable to break down their budgets sufficiently to provide the data requested.

Table 5 APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR PRESCHOOL SERVICES

| Approximate Percentage of Budget | Number of Libraries Responding | Percentage of Libraries Responding |
|---|---|---|
| 1% | 10 | 5.9 |
| 1 - 10% | 34 | 20 |
| 11 - 20% | 16 | 9 |
| 21 - 35% | 11 | 6.5 |
| 36 - 50% | 21 | 12.4 |
| no response | 78 | 45.9 |

In 1980 the results of a study conducted by Frances Smardo [1] indicated that professionals in public libraries who work with pre-

[1]Smardo, "Are Librarians Prepared to Serve Young Children?" p. 274.

schoolers in libraries lack sufficient understanding of the developmental stages of early childhood to successfully assist their young patrons. Smardo´s study indicated that few librarians who provided services for preschoolers had received sufficient training in the area of early childhood education. To check Smardo´s contention, the librarians surveyed were asked to tell whether this employee held a Masters in Library Science degree, a Bachelor of Arts degree, or some other degree. Finally they were asked to indicate whether this librarian had received any training in early childhood education and the source of this training.

Of the 170 librarians who reported that their libraries offered services to preschoolers, 76 reported that their libraries employed a librarian to provide services to preschoolers. Of this number 37 reported that these librarians held Masters in Library Science degrees, 19 held Bachelor of Arts degrees, and twenty held educational credentials ranging from high school diplomas to Masters in Education degree. Twelve librarians reported that all their preschool services were provided by volunteers.

Of the 76 librarians who reported that their libraries employ a librarian to provide services to preschoolers, 60 reported that these librarians had some training in early

childhood education. Table 6 shows the breakdown of sources of the early childhood education training.

Table 6 SOURCES OF TRAINING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

N = 76

| Sources | Number of Libraries Using each source | Percentage of Libraries Using Each Sourch |
|---|---|---|
| College Courses | 46 | 60.5 |
| Workshops | 45 | 59 |
| Inservice Training | 24 | 31.5 |
| Direct Job Experience | 57 | 75 |
| Other | 11 | 14.5 |

Other includes volunteer work with preschoolers, work in day care centers, parenting and teacher training

The majority of respondents indicated that the training had come from a combination of sources but the source most often cited was direct job experience or a "learn as you go" method of training. Since only 76 of 170 respondents completed this information concerning the persons who provide services to preschool children, it would seem that these findings correspond to Smardo's and that indeed, "the area of personnel is a high priority with as yet unmet needs."[1] As

[1]Smardo, "Are Librarians Prepared to Serve Young Children?" p. 282.

Smardo points out and as this survey tends to indicate, few persons who are currently providing services to preschool children in public libraries have training in the area of early childhood education sufficient to assist them in providing the most effective kinds of services.

Based on the information gathered from this survey, it seems that preschool services in Texas libraries suffer from a lack of sufficient funding and trained staff, and therefore, seem to hold a low priority among public library services.

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The following major conclusions, with some comments, can be drawn from this study.

1. While librarians in Texas public libraries are providing some services to preschool children, these services are traditional in content and are generally scheduled irregularly.
2. Outreach to community preschool programs and parent-child cooperative activities are rarely offered.
3. In many libraries, services for preschoolers are conducted most often in the summer when they can be linked to the summer reading programs traditionally designed for school age children.
4. Portions of libraries' budgets allocated to preschool services are, in general, quite small. Poor funding may be one of the major stumbling blocks to innovation and outreach in preschool services in these libraries. Clearly, preschool services do not rank high in terms of priorities in most of the libraries surveyed.

5. Generally, the most common source of training in early childhood education for the librarians providing preschool services is on the job training. Many librarians reportedly did receive training from more than one source, however, and the next most common sources of training were workshops and college courses.
6. Few libraries employ a librarian to provide services to preschool children. Preschool service is an item of low priority in terms of staffing.
7. Obviously, more research is needed in this area of library service. It is difficult to ascertain whether preschool programs are not a priority because of a lack of funding or because a failure on the part of librarians to see them as a priority leads to a lack of proper funding.
8. Is there sufficient demand for preschool services in libraries today to warrant staffing and funding? Research is needed to ascertain the kinds of programs and services that will be most useful to the preschool population. Librarians need assistance in this area.
9. Few libraries have sought funding from outside sources including federal, state and private grants to use for the development of preschool services.

Interestingly, those who have received grant monies to start services have maintained the majority of them. Perhaps the low priority status of preschool services in public libraries has prevented librarians from seeking sources of funding to initiate them.

10. Few librarians who offer services to preschool children have sufficient training in the area of early childhood education to enable them to plan and develop services that will be beneficial to their young patrons. While the story times offered by most of the libraries surveyed are beneficial to young patrons if only for the fact that they introduce these children to the library, obviously they are not the only ways a librarian can provide services to this age range. Librarians who do not feel knowledgeable in this area will not attempt to explore it.

## SUMMARY

If one can assume that the findings of this study and those of Grover, Moore and Smardo tend to reflect what is happening in preschool services nationally, then it seems that the interest in such services generated in the 1970's no longer exists. This is of particular significance in view of the recent release of the report to the nation and the Secretary of Education, entitled A Nation At Risk, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report indicated that the educational system in the United States is in need of immediate and massive reform in order to meet the challenges of the future.

Of particular importance to librarians is the response to this report by the American Library Assoication's Task Force on Excellence in Education. The statement of the Task Force, entitled Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society,[1] points out four realities for effective educational reform in a learning society. They are:

1. Learning begins before schooling.
2. Good schools have good school libraries.

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[1]American Library Association, Realities: Educatonal Reform in a Learning Society. Chicago: American Library Association, p. 2.

3. People in a learning society need libraries throughtout their lives.
4. Public support of libraries is an investment in people and communities. [1]

Of major significance to librarians who serve preschoolers are statements 1, 3, and 4. The Task Force points out that "libraries contribute to preschool learning in two major ways: through the services, programs, and materials that help parents increase their skills and capabilities, and through programs that serve children directly." [2]

Further, the Task Force indicates that because of inadequate funding and insufficient numbers of staff, many libraries have cut back programs to children in general and preschoolers in particular. This contention is supported by the study just completed. To ensure that preschoolers and their parents are to have effective programs and services, the Task Force states that public officials should respond immediately and in two ways:

-Appropriate funds for parent education and early childhood services in public libraries, particularly those which demonstrate outreach and which promote cooperation with other educational and community agencies.

-Establish state and federal regulations for preschool day care services which mandate book and library re-

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid. p. 3

sources as part of the basic program requirements. [1]

This writer contends that before the public officials can rise to this challenge and guarantee funding and regulations as prescribed by the Task Force, librarians themselves must look seriously at preschool services and their place in the public library. Librarians should educate themselves about the learning needs of preschool children in order to plan effective services, be prepared to serve as resource persons in the community, and act as advocates for this underserved population.

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[1]American Library Association, Realities, p. 3.

APPENDIX A

124 South Rennie Street
Ada, Oklahoma 74820
August 24, 1984

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am conducting a survey of public library services to preschool children and would sincerely appreciate your assistance in compiling data on this topic. This survey is being done under the supervision of Dr. Bernard Schlessinger of the School of Library Science at Texas Woman's University and will serve as the basis for the professional paper which is a requirement for completion of the Masters Degree in Library Science.

The responses to the enclosed questionnaire will remain confidential and the data will be presented only in statistical form within the paper. If there are questions which you do not wish to answer, please leave them blank and return the questionnaire to me at the following address:

Joyce W. Bergin
124 South Rennie Street
Ada, Oklahoma 74820

In order to insure that your responses are recorded, please return the questionnaire postmarked no later than September 30, 1984. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Joyce W. Bergin

Joyce W. Bergin

Enclosures 2

Results of this survey will serve as data for my professional paper which will be completed under the supervision of Dr. Bernard Schlessinger of the School of Library Science at Texas Woman's University. The results will remain confidential and only appear statistically in the paper. Please answer as many questions as possible and return the questionnaire postmarked no later than September 30, 1984 to:

Joyce W. Bergin
124 South Rennie Street
Ada, Oklahoma 74820

Thank you.

1. Name of library: _____

2. Name and title of respondent: _____

_____

3. Does your library provide ongoing services to children who range in age from 1 to 5 years?

Yes ____ No ____

If your answer is yes, please go on to question 4. Otherwise, please return the questionnaire to the sender.

4. A survey of the library literature indicates that there are a number of common forms which preschool services can take. Please study the list of programs provided below.

Locate the programs that most closely resemble those offered at your library.

Check (✓) the frequency of those services offered at your library.

| SERVICE | DAILY | WEEKLY | TWICE A MONTH | ONCE A MONTH | LESS OFTEN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STORY TIME (multi-media) | | | | | |
| OUTREACH TO COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS | | | | | |
| EDUCATIONAL TOY LENDING | | | | | |
| PARENT/CHILD COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
| DIAL-A-STORY | | | | | |
| ARTS/CRAFTS ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
| FILM/FILMSTRIP SHOWS | | | | | |
| MUSICAL PROGRAMS | | | | | |
| STORY TELLING | | | | | |
| OTHER (please list) | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Please feel free to attach descriptive literature pertaining to your own unique preschool programs.

5. What is the approximate percentage of your library's total budget which is allocated for services provided directly to children, across the spectrum of preschoolers through age twelve?

_____%

6. What is the approximate percentage of the total children's budget allocated for services to preschool children?

_____%

7. How many of the programs for preschool children were begun with special grants?

Total number _____

8. If any of the preschool programs were begun with grant monies, please indicate the source below.

Federal (LSCA, etc.) ____ State ____ Private agencies_____

9. Of the programs begun through special grants, how many are currently being offered in your library?

Total number _____

10. Is there a librarian, whose function is to provide service to preschool children, employed by your library?

Yes ____ No _____

11. If yes, does the librarian hold an MLS ___ BA ___ Other _____?

12. If your library does employ a librarian to provide services to preschool children, does this person have training or experience in the area of early childhood education?

Yes ____ No ____

13. If yes, how was this experience or training received? Please check all that apply.

College courses ____ Workshops ____ Inservice training ____

Direct job experience ____ Other (please specify) _____

_____

_____

14. For how many years has your library provided services to preschool children?

Total number _____

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